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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, November, 1886.

AVAILABLE FRENCH TEXTS, II.

The catalogue of the French publications of Henry Holt & Co., New York, offers as varied a list as that of some of the best European publishers. It is a little heterogeneous, but as the least valuable books date many years back and as the best have been issued comparatively lately, I shall dwell principally upon the latter.

The place of honor is due to the Series of *Classic French Plays* annotated by Prof. Edward S. Joynes, of South Carolina College. Although it is intended in these notices to speak only of texts and of their availability for the class-room, I cannot omit speaking of the excellence of Prof. Joynes' notes. They are just what notes should be, short, clear, precise, always to the purpose, sufficiently learned, and yet free from the facile erudition which consists in swelling out the matter by taking with both hands from books not accessible to all and in referring the pupils to works of all kinds which they will never consult. Prof. Joynes has annotated six plays: Corneille, 'Le Cid' and 'Cinna'; Racine, 'Athalie' and 'Esther'; and Molière, 'L'Avare' and 'Le Misanthrope.' The Series is continued by three plays, with notes at the foot of each page, by M. Léon Delbos, namely: Molière, 'Le Bourgeois gentilhomme'; Corneille, 'Horace,' and Racine 'Les Plaideurs.' The lines are numbered in all, which makes them very convenient, and they are sold at fifty cents each. Of all the above, 'Les Plaideurs' is the most difficult; it could only be read with profit in a very advanced class. I am glad to find that it has not been expurgated. 'L'Avare' and 'Le Bourgeois gentilhomme' being both in prose could be read in a class not very advanced, say in the latter half of a second year of French. The others being all in verse, in the French Alexandrines, to which instructors will often find that American youth do not take kindly, are suited only for classes where it has ceased to be necessary to dwell upon minor difficulties. In fact they ought to be read in French, not translated. The class of literature to which they belong is so remote from what students and very often teachers are

accustomed to, that in order to be appreciated at all they ought to be thought and felt in French without the interposition of English. In the course of my experience, I have found that young men take more readily to Corneille than to Racine; the 'Cid' is always a success with a class sufficiently prepared. On the contrary young women often find great pleasure in Racine, especially in the lyric parts of 'Athalie' and 'Esther.' As to the 'Misanthrope' it is often a disappointing play to read with a class. It really succeeds in interesting only when several other plays of Molière have been read, and when the instructor himself has become fully impressed with the fact that he is reading a masterpiece. Then, indeed, it is perfect reading for both scholar and teacher. The first act especially offers excellent material for memorizing.

Another series of plays which have come into Mr. Holt's hands is the 'College Series of French Plays.' It does not become me to dwell upon these, as I selected most of them, many years ago, and made short notes to them all. There are nine of them, they are all in prose and all unobjectionable, and most of them are easy reading.

Several isolated plays figure in the catalogue which may be pleasant reading but which are of little value as text books. Perhaps 'Le Village' by Octave Feuillet might be excepted. 'Un Caprice' by Alfred de Musset has of course literary merit. There are also several excellent plays for children, notably those by Souvestre, but it is not my purpose to speak of those here. I shall also purposely pass by all readers and selections rather intended for elementary school instruction than for colleges, and the many very good books for younger pupils.

From what among Mr. Holt's publications is included under the heading 'Bibliothèque d'Instruction et de Récréation' several very good works may be selected. Achard, 'Le Clos-Pommier' is a pretty story of Norman life, almost too real to be always pleasant. It is a very faithful picture of the localities in which the scenes are laid. It is a good book for rather elementary classes. In the same volume is included a beautiful short sketch by Xavier

de Maistre, 'Les Prisonniers du Caucase.' The '*Choix de contes contemporains*,' edited and annotated by Mr. B. F. O'Connor, of Columbia College, is an excellent collection of short stories by some of the very best modern writers, Daudet, Coppée, Theuriet, About, Théophile Gautier, Alfred de Musset. The selections from Daudet are particularly felicitous. Broad as the choice has been, the volume contains specimens of easy French by the side of some difficult reading, which may be a recommendation for those who wish for a variety in one book. To be used with full profit, Mr. O'Connor's selections ought not to be read in the order in which he has edited them, unless the easier stories are left to the students to take as outside reading.

The reasons that prevented my entering into details about the College Series of French Plays also make it proper that I should only mention George Sand, 'La petite Fadette,' Erckmann-Chatrian, 'Le Conscrit de 1813,' and also by the same authors 'Le Blocus' and 'Madame Thérèse' which are to be published shortly.*

Feuillet, 'Le Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre' is one of the prettiest and purest stories that could be put in the hands of any class. It is too old a favorite with teachers to need further recommendation. It is not difficult reading. As to 'Chouans et Bleus' by the clever and prolific writer Paul Féval, I have not seen it. The 'Œuvres complètes de Xavier de Maistre' is a good book for college classés. The best things in the volume are 'Voyage autour de ma chambre,' a gem in its way, and 'Le Lépreux de la cité d'Aoste.' The volume really contains all that Xavier de Maistre wrote except his correspondence. It is all very easy French. The

* This article was written before the summer vacation. In the meantime Mr. Holt has published 'Le Blocus' and 'Madame Thérèse,' both by Erckmann-Chatrian, with notes.
F. B.

The reputation of the annotator of these works is sufficient guarantee for their peculiar fitness for the class-room. Prof. Bôcher has been happy here in his choice of texts and has performed the duties of guide to teacher and student with that felicitous literary and artistic sense which characterises the whole series edited by him. 'Madame Thérèse' is an especially good and interesting book, and highly merits a wide circle of readers outside of the schools where it is sure to be extensively used.
A. M. E.

five short works in it have sufficed to give the author a high rank among the most delicate of French writers.

FERDINAND BÔCHER.

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ENGLISH IN THE HIGH SCHOOL.

The recent selection of a teacher to the chair of English literature at the Philadelphia High School to fill the vacancy occasioned some months ago by the promotion of Dr. Franklin Taylor to the Presidency of the school, has been attended by circumstances of peculiar interest. The candidates for the office were subjected to a competitive examination which was designed to bring to light their relative scholarship, the basis upon which the selection was to be made. To this extent the procedure may be said to lack any special novelty. When, however, the appointing body, after a hesitancy indeed that usually marks the acceptance of a new doctrine, is found to abide firmly by the result of a self-imposed test, we may flatter ourselves with a glimpse of hopeful signs.

Mr. Horace Howard Furness having consented to serve on this occasion as one of the examiners, was led in the discharge of this duty, to reflect upon the present needs of our High Schools in the department of English, and by request gave formal expression to his views in a letter addressed to Mr. Edward T. Steel, President of the Board of Education of Philadelphia. This letter was read before the High School Committee of that Board, and was afterwards made public by the daily press. The high distinction of Mr. Furness as an English scholar gives this letter a special value, and abundantly justifies a reproduction in these columns of its chief portion, without comment.

J. W. BRIGHT.

"No. 222 WASHINGTON SQUARE, May 2, 1886.—Dear Mr. Steel: As my time is limited, I will, without preface, enter at once on the purpose of this letter.

I think we will all agree that in the opportunities which it offers to its scholars it is not enough that our High School should be merely abreast of the times, though that is well, but we want to have it lead the times. We do not want to follow examples, but to set them. To